

My Autism Guide
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Information
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your needs

guide.autismspeaks.org



Puzzle Piece Project

Increasing Understanding and Acceptance
of People with Autism

 **AUTISM SPEAKS**[®] FAMILY SERVICES

Table of Contents

Puzzle Piece Project Introduction	Page 1
About Autism & Autism Speaks	Page 2
School-Wide Activities	Page 3
K-1 st Grade Lesson Plan	Page 4
2 nd -3 rd Grade Lesson Plan	Page 6
4 th -5 th Grade Lesson Plan	Page 8
6 th -9 th Grade Lesson Plan	Page 10
10 th -12 th Grade Lesson Plan	Page 12
Materials Index	Page 14
Internet Resources Guide	Page 24
Book List	Page 25
Book Discussion Guide	Page 27
FAQs – Sample Questions	Page 29
Thank You	Page 30

Legal Disclaimer: Autism Speaks maintains the Puzzle Piece Project Tool Kit as a guide for teachers to use to help increase understanding and acceptance of people with autism. The information and resources listed in this tool kit are not intended as a recommendation, referral, or endorsement of any resource or as an endorsement of credentials, qualifications, or abilities of any organization, product or professional. **For more Tool Kits visit AutismSpeaks.org.**



The Puzzle Piece Project

Thank you for participating in our school-wide Puzzle Piece Project. Enclosed are differentiated lesson plans for grade levels K-12. In addition, you will find a list of resources to share with your class or for personal use.

Your tool kit includes the following materials:

- 1) **Grade Level Lesson Plan**
- 2) **Internet Resource Guide and Book List**
- 3) **Materials Index**
- 4) **Puzzle Piece Template**

Each class should create enough pieces for one per student and they should all connect to other pieces in your class. In order for this to be a school-wide project, all classes will share the puzzle with at least one other class. Please see the template provided in the Materials Index or go to: timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates. Teachers are advised to number each puzzle piece, students can design the side that does not have the number on it. Numbering the puzzle pieces is the easiest way to reassemble.

- 5) **Discussion Guide** for specific high school reading suggestions
- 6) **Request Form** for follow up lessons/activities from your Special Education Team (see Materials Index)
- (7) **FAQs** Samples of questions asked by kids



Please maintain an ongoing list of class questions/concerns/comments that come up during any of the following lessons. You can use a KWL chart, a Parking Lot (see Materials Index) or any other ideas you have to document information. Encourage your students to ask questions, tell stories and express any concerns they have about autism, differences, disabilities, etc. Write these questions down and ask your special education teachers or the students themselves to respond. Please share any of your highlights (stories, photos, etc.) as a result of this project with Autism Speaks at FamilyServices@AutismSpeaks.org.

About Autism

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, refers to a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. We now know that there is not one autism but many subtypes, and each person with autism can have unique strengths and challenges. Most forms are caused by a combination of genetic and environmental influences, and many are accompanied by medical issues such as GI disorders, seizures and sleep disturbances.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates 1 in 68 children is on the autism spectrum.

About Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks is dedicated to promoting solutions, across the spectrum and throughout the life span, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. We do this through advocacy and support; increasing understanding and acceptance of people with autism; and advancing research into causes and better interventions for autism spectrum disorder and related conditions. Through partnerships and collaboration, we are committed to:

- ***Increasing global understanding and acceptance of people with autism***
- ***Being a catalyst for research breakthroughs***
- ***Increasing early-childhood screening and timely interventions***
- ***Improving the transition to adulthood***
- ***Ensuring access to reliable information and services throughout the life span***

Why is this Puzzle Piece Project Important?

Every person with autism has their own unique strengths and challenges. The Puzzle Piece Project will help you to:

- ***Spread understanding and acceptance of autism throughout your school and community***
- ***Celebrate and honor the unique talents and skills of people with autism***
- ***Educate the school community on how to support people with autism***



School-wide Activities

Increasing Understanding and Acceptance in Schools

Here are a few suggestions on ways you can participate in a school-wide effort to increase understanding and acceptance and show your community that you care.

Plan and Event and Wear Blue:

Ask your entire school to wear Blue on World Autism Awareness Day, April 2nd and throughout April, World Autism Month.

Sensory Input Exhibit:

Set up a sensory exhibit if you have access to sensory materials, ie: tunnels, weighted vests, body sock, squeeze machine, swing, scooter, deep pressure, brushes, etc.

Technology Lab:

Set up a tech lab and include available school AAC devices, iPads for communication apps and low tech pages. Have kids explore conversations with toys and games with the devices and books. Experience the difference between low and high tech. When they don't have voice output, they will need a partner to say things out loud for them or read what they are saying. When they use AAC, it will take longer to make a message, so they will need their partners to be patient, etc.

(Note: If your school does not have access to these items, check with local OT/PT therapy centers or family support centers for resource assistance)

Film Festival:

Set up a series of YouTube videos in the library, play "Autism the Musical" during lunch periods or choose a full length film about autism. *(See Internet Resource Guide)*

Recess Resources:

Gather a group of students at recess to explore ways to make recess games more inclusive. Create materials to illustrate new ideas. Download the [Visual Aid Tool Kit](#) and [Leading the Way Tool Kit](#) to get started!

Start a Club:

Start an autism understanding and acceptance club at your school to keep educating your school community and offering autism friendly activities all year round!

Elementary K - 1st

Introductory Activity:

This lesson focuses on “Differences.” Use the following books and videos to help children explore their own unique attributes, as well as differences other people might have.

Hang up a “Differences Chart” in a place that the children can reach. Each child should have his or her own stickers. They can put their sticker under any category that describes them. (Encourage kids to make their own choices, instead of working with friends.)

Materials:

Differences Chart

Stickers

(see materials Index)

Resources:

Susan Laughs *by Jeanne Willis*

It's Okay To Be Different *by Todd Parr*

I Am Me (1:05)

[youtube.com/watch?v=KZsEr1fhgWY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZsEr1fhgWY)

Discussion Frame:

Review the chart together and lead a short discussion about the things each of them has in common with the other kids in the class. Also point out the things that are unique about each of them. Encourage a “partner share” with the person next to them about what they think is unique about themselves.

Elementary K - 1st

Puzzle Piece Project:

Create a puzzle using the template or website link in the Materials Index. Ensure there is one puzzle piece for each student and number the back for easy reassembling.

Have the students draw something they like, their favorite color or food. The fact that every puzzle piece is different furthers the lesson theme.

Materials:

Puzzle Pieces ([see Materials Index](#) or timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates/)

Art Supplies

Discussion Frame:

Explain how each puzzle piece is different, but they all come together to make something beautiful. Just like each student is unique, but together make a wonderful class and a fantastic school. Every puzzle piece (and student) has something special to add that no other piece has.

If you want to take this conversation further, you can talk about how some things are hard for one person, but easy for another. In a puzzle, it is easy for a corner piece to fit a corner, but a middle piece could never do that job. Someone might be really good at naming all of the different kinds of dinosaurs or solving really hard math problems, but that same person might not know how to play kickball.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Differences Chart:

with **Some Monsters are Different**
by David Milgrim

Similarities:

What do we have in common?
Read **Susan Laughs** *by Jeanne Willis* or
My Friend Isabelle
by Eliza Woloson

Survey Activity:

Scavenger hunt "Find someone who..."

Elementary 2nd - 3rd

Introductory Activity:

This lesson focuses on “What is autism?” Use the following videos to begin a discussion about autism. Use the KWL chart or Parking Lot to write down questions.

Materials:

KWL Chart

“Parking Lot” for Questions

(included in materials Index)

Resources:

My Autism and Me Video (14 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ)

Intro to Autism for Kids (7 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiy5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiy5c)

I am the Child (4 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=xK1AG7gXVIM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK1AG7gXVIM)

Differences Activity:

“Close your eyes and raise your hand if . . .” Call out different activities the students like/don’t like, things that are hard/easy for them, physical attributes, personality traits, things that make them mad/happy/sad, etc. Instruct them to close their eyes so they are not answering based on their peers’ answers. When they open their eyes, they can see how each of them is unique and what they have in common with the other people in their class.

Venn Diagram Activity:

Recommended for Grade 2

With a partner, have the students create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast their physical attributes, personality traits, likes and dislikes. Challenge them to find several things that they have in common, as well as ways that each of them is unique.

Recommended for Grade 3

Tell the students to choose a book from the enclosed Book List. Read the book and identify the main character. Instruct them to create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast their physical attributes, personality traits, likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, etc. with those of the main character in the book. Challenge them to find several things that they have in common, as well as ways they are unique.

Materials:

(see materials Index)

Venn Diagram

Book List *(for grade 3 activity)*



Elementary 2nd - 3rd

Puzzle Piece Project:

Create a puzzle using the template or website link in the Materials Index. Ensure there is one puzzle piece for each student and number the backs for easy reassembling.

Encourage the students to draw something that represents their own unique qualities or anyway you choose to illustrate differences.

Materials:

Puzzle Pieces (*see Materials Index or timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates*)

Art Supplies

Discussion Frame:

Explain about how each puzzle piece is different, but they all come together to make something beautiful. Just like each student is unique, but together make a wonderful class and a fantastic school. Every puzzle piece (and student) has something special to add that no other piece has.

If you want to take this conversation further, you can talk about how some things are hard for one person, but easy for another. In a puzzle, it is easy for a corner piece to fit a corner, but a middle piece could never do that job. Someone might be really good at naming all of the different kinds of dinosaurs or solving really hard math problems, but that same person might not know how to play kickball.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Different/Same Game:

with hand-raising or taking steps forward

Partner Drawing:

Learn about nonverbal communication by working silently to make a collaborative art piece with a partner. Halfway through, teach three signs (draw, more and stop), then discuss how it helps to know a few ways to communicate. What worked? What didn't? How did it feel to not be able to talk to each other?

Sensory Stations:

- Headphones
- Weighted vests
- Itchy clothes
- Smelly things
- Light show

Elementary 4th - 5th

Introductory Activity:

This lesson will use the following videos to begin a discussion on “What is autism?” Use the KWL chart to write down questions/comments.

Materials:

KWL Chart

(included in materials Index)

Resources:

My Autism and Me Video (14 minutes)

youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ

Intro to Autism for Kids (7 minutes)

youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiY5c

I am the Child (4 minutes)

youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pXCGo3Ns

Poetry Study Activity:

Have the students write poems about themselves focused on their unique qualities and things that make them special. Read their poems and discuss them in your group. Which one is your favorite? Why? Examples might include things that they like and don't like.

Resources:

Poems listed in Internet Resources Guide

Elementary 4th - 5th

Puzzle Piece Project:

Instruct students to design a puzzle piece to match their poem or select a poem from the suggested list. The poems can be written on or attached to the puzzle pieces.

Discussion Frame:

Explain how each puzzle piece is different, but they all come together to make something beautiful. Just like each student is unique, but together make a wonderful class and a fantastic school. Every puzzle piece (and student) has something special to add that no other piece has.

If you want to take this conversation further, you can talk about how some things are hard for one person, but easy for another. In a puzzle, it is easy for a corner piece to fit a corner, but a middle piece could never do that job. Someone might be really good at naming all of the different kinds of dinosaurs or solving really hard math problems, but that same person might not know how to play kickball.

Materials:

Puzzle Pieces

(see *Materials Index* or timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates)

Art Supplies

Resources:

Autism Poetry

karensscrapsandgraphics.com/poetry/poetry.htm

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Sensory Overload Spelling Test:

Create sensory overload (lights, blinds, fan, perfume, smelly food, classroom noises, itchy clothes, etc.), then give a spelling test and see if students can focus.

Student Presentations:

Have the students give presentations about themselves or a sibling/friend with autism.

Reading Activity:

Read the **Autism Acceptance Book** by *Ellen Sabin*

Middle School 6th - 9th

Introductory Activity:

Use the following videos to begin a discussion on “What is autism?” Use the KWL chart to write down questions/comments.

Materials:

KWL Chart

“Autism Basics” Autism Speaks
[*School Community Tool Kit*](#)

(included in materials Index)

Resources:

Intro to Autism for Kids (7 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiy5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiy5c)

I am the Child (4 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pXCGo3Ns](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pXCGo3Ns)

Autism Speaks School Community Tool Kit

www.autismspeaks.org/school

My Autism and Me Activity:

Watch the “My Autism and Me” videos.

Read the “My Autism and Me” poems.

Read the “Sibling Stories”.

Complete the activities about the perspective of the narrator.

Materials:

(see materials Index)

Video Clips

Perspective Worksheet

Poem Selections

Sibling Story Selections

Resources:

My Autism and Me Video (14 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ)

I am the Child (4 minutes)

[youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pXCGo3Ns](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pXCGo3Ns)

Internet Resource Guide

Book List

My _____ and Me:

Recommended 8th Grade Essay

Ask students to choose something unique about themselves. Have them write a short paragraph or essay about how this trait affects their daily life, academics, social skills, etc.

Middle School 6th - 9th

Puzzle Piece Project:

Have each student design a puzzle piece that symbolizes how they are unique.

Materials:

Puzzle Pieces (*see Materials Index or timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates*)

Art Supplies

Discussion Frame:

Explain how each piece is different, but they all come together to make something beautiful. Just like each student is unique, but we all come together to make a wonderful class and a fantastic school. Every puzzle piece (and student) has something special to add, that no other piece has.

If you want to take this conversation further, you can talk about how some things are hard for one person, but easy for another. In a puzzle, it is easy for a corner piece to fit a corner, but a middle piece could never do that job. Someone might be really good at naming all of the state capitals or solving really hard math problems, but that same person might not know how to play soccer.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Sensory Overload Spelling Test:

Create sensory overload (lights, blinds, fan, perfume, smelly food, classroom noises, itchy clothes, etc.), then give a spelling test and see if students can focus.

Student Presentations:

Have the students give presentations about themselves or a sibling/friend with autism.

Write a Social Story:

Using Google images or Boardmaker icons, build a social story about a certain topic or situation at your school.

High School 10th - 12th

Introductory Activity:

Ask students to research “What is autism?” by visiting recommended websites and completing the “Webpage Exploration” worksheet.

Extend the activity by assigning one website to each group and have them make a presentation about the views and definitions represented on their site.

Materials:

Internet Access

Webpage Exploration
Worksheet

(included in materials Index)

Resources:

Internet Resource Guide

Book Report Activity:

Have students choose a book from the recommended book list and complete a book report.

Have groups choose different books from the list and engage in group discussion/questions about the book.

Materials:

Books

Discussion Questions

(included in materials Index)

Resources:

Book List

Discussion Guide

High School 10th - 12th

Puzzle Piece Project:

Have students design a puzzle piece or pieces to represent themselves. They should be able to describe how and why it is representative.

Materials:

Puzzle Pieces (*see Materials Index or timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates*)

Art Supplies (be creative!)

Discussion Frame:

Explain how piece is different, but they all come together to make something beautiful. Just like each student is unique, but we all come together to make a wonderful class and a fantastic school. Every puzzle piece (and student) has something special to add, that no other piece has.

If you want to take this conversation further, you can talk about how some things are hard for one person, but easy for the next. In a puzzle, it is easy for a corner piece to fit a corner, but a middle piece could never do that job. Someone might be really good at naming all of the state capitals or solving really hard math problems, but that same person might not know how to play soccer.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Explore other

Differences/Disabilities:

Compare and contrast social media – search and compare blogs.

Study a Famous

Person with

Autism

Search for the

Diagnostic

Criteria- DSM-V:

Description

Have a Fundraiser

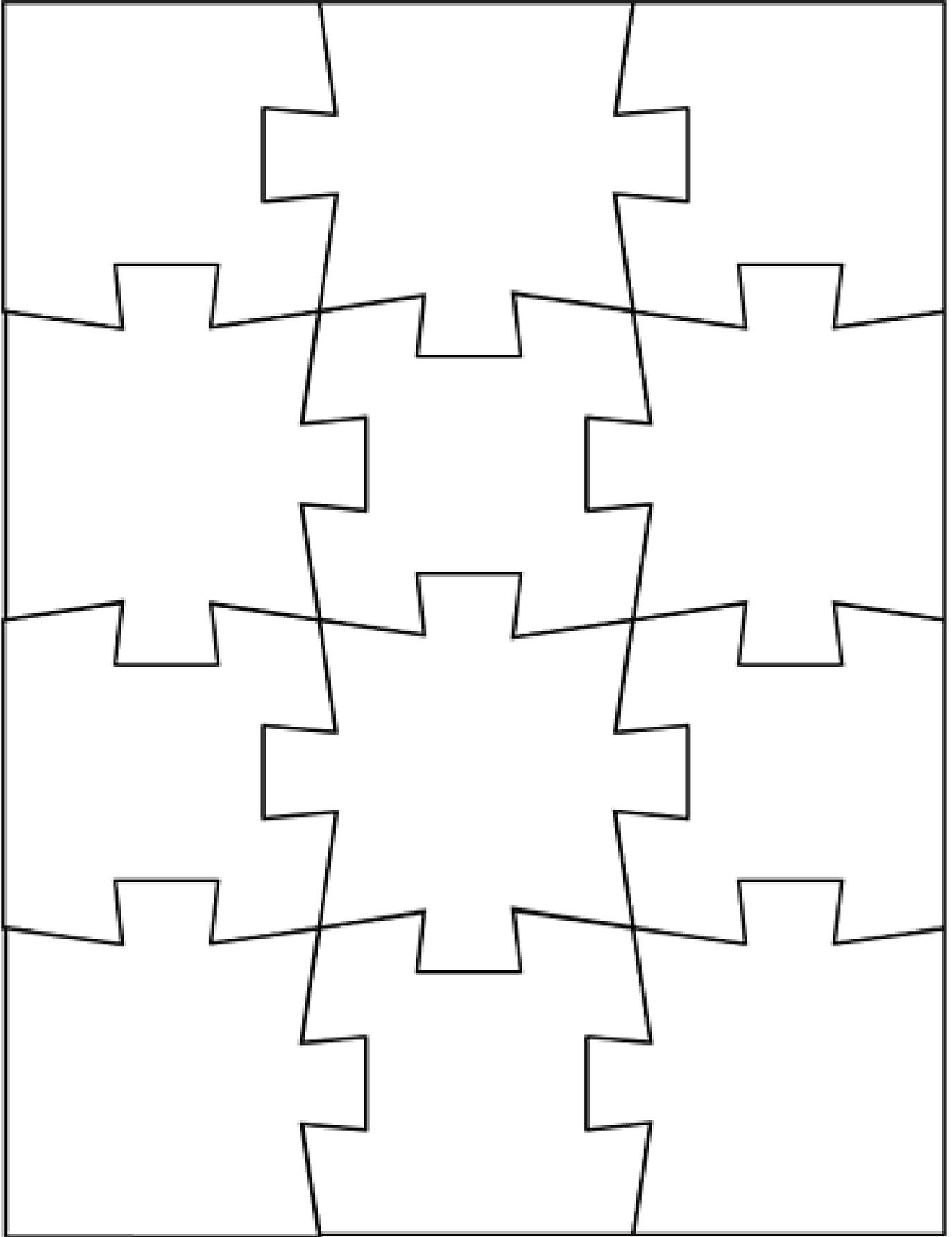
or Volunteer

How can you make a difference?

Materials Index

Puzzle Template

For different sized templates, go to timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates.



KWL Chart

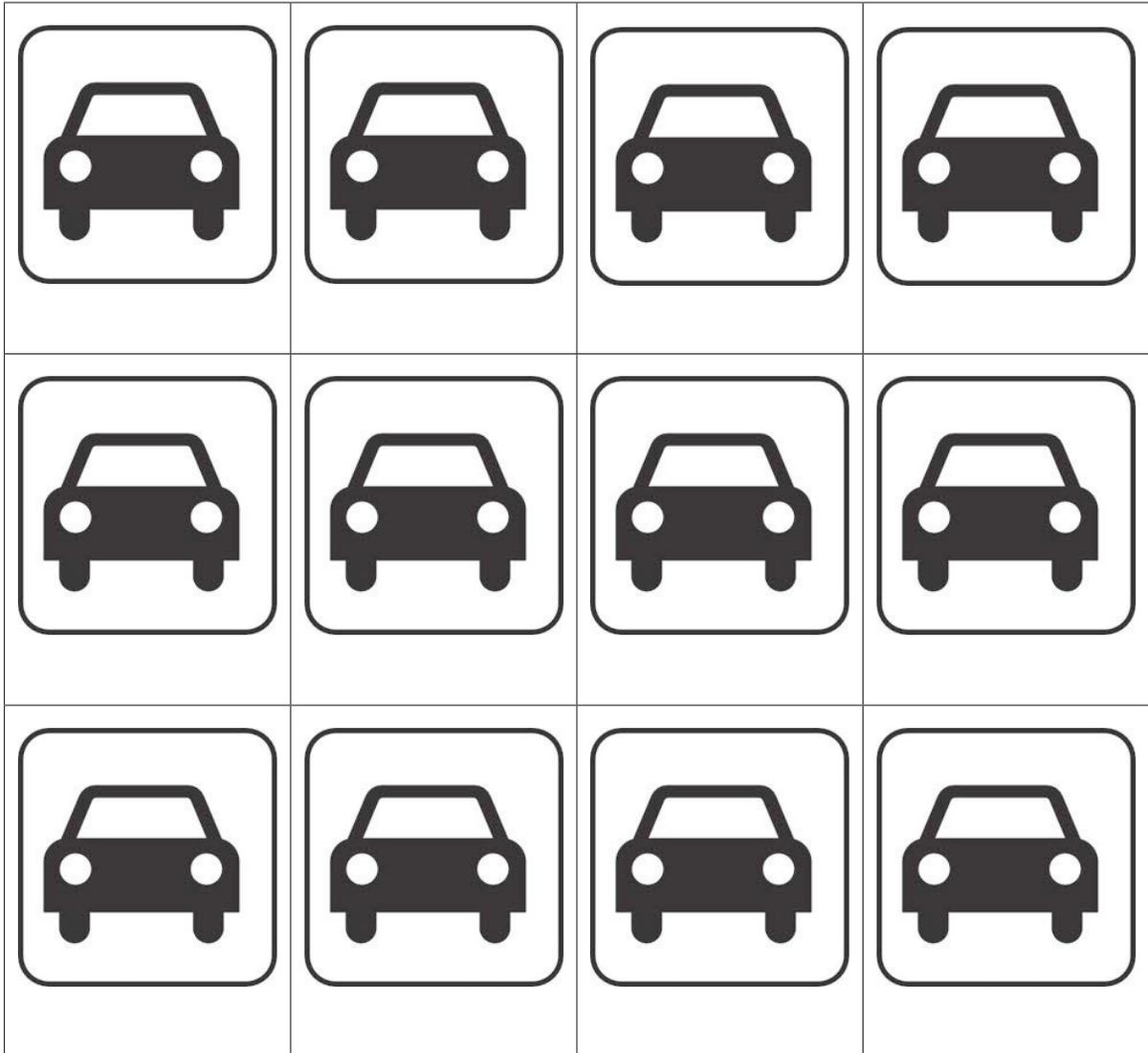
Know	Want to Know	Learned

Parking Lot Cars:

This works best as a poster, so make a copy and expand the size if you can so that the whole class can see the parking lot throughout the day. Copy and cut out these cars and instruct students to write their question or comment on the back of the car and tape it in the lot. The group can discuss the questions at a later time. This allows the teacher a chance to research the answer or check with a special educator for more information if they don't immediately know how to respond to the topic.



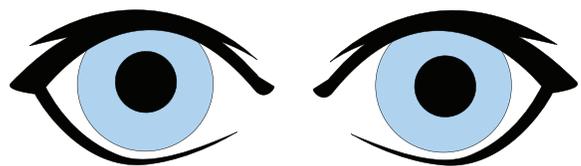
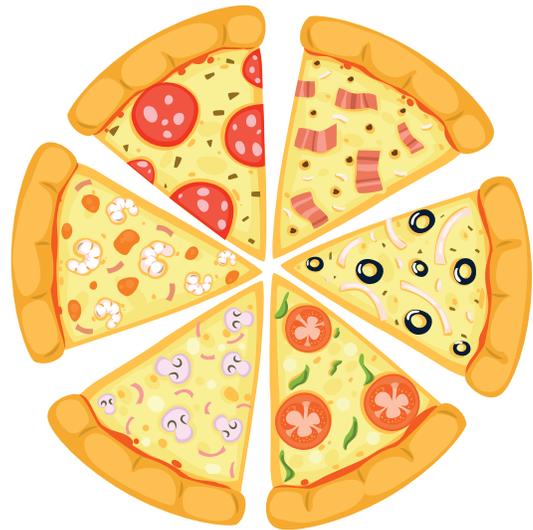
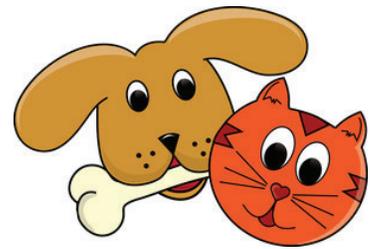
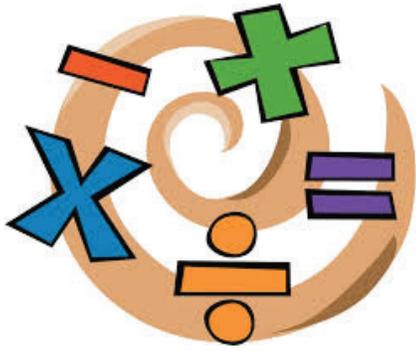
If you have a question or comment to share with the group, write it on a car and park it here in the parking lot



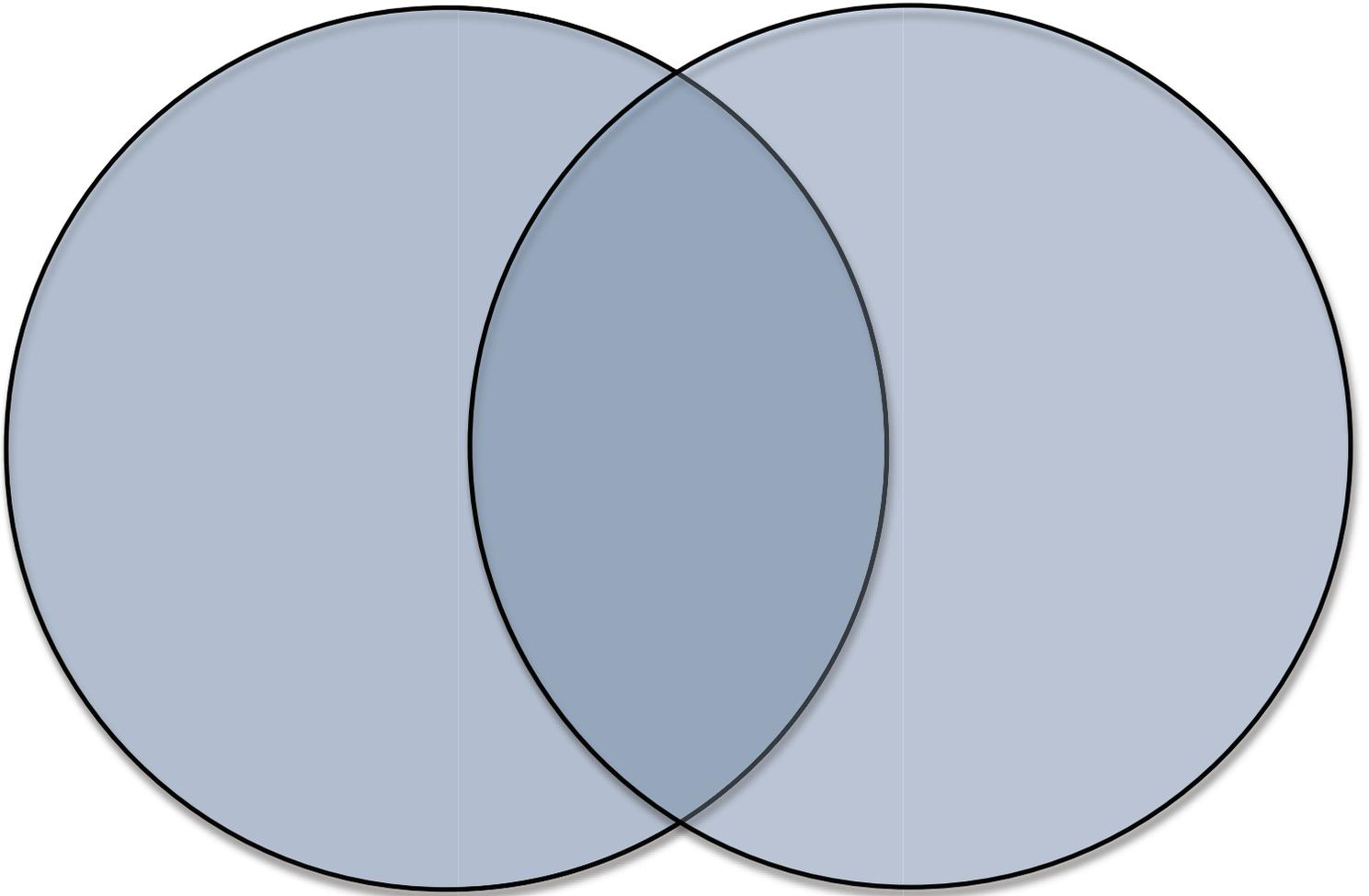
Samples of Visuals to Use on the Differences Chart

Cut out these images and attach above a section on your Differences Chart. Have students write their name or place a sticker in the section if the picture represents them in some way. Label the sections in a way that is appropriate for your class (ex; "I am good at reading" or "Reading is hard for me").

Create your own images and categories for things that are relevant to your classroom and school community. Examples might include favorite colors, eye and hair color, hobbies, siblings or only child, apartment or house, favorite foods



Venn Diagram



Perspective Worksheet

Book/Poem Title: _____

Author: _____

Who is the narrator? Describe the narrator's personality and relationship to the story.

What is the narrator's relationship to the character with autism?

How might the story be different from a different character's perspective?

Webpage Exploration Worksheet

WEB PAGE/URL	WEBSITE DESCRIPTION	TARGETED AUDIENCE	WHAT DO YOU FIND MOST SIGNIFICANT OR INTERESTING ABOUT THIS SITE?

Request Form

If you or your students have questions/comments/concerns about autism or other learning differences, please return this slip to the special education teacher or specialist who is assigned to your school or district.

Questions:

Comments:

Concerns:

My class would benefit from an ability awareness lesson on the following topic(s):

1.

2.

Internet Resources

INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES

Autism Speaks

www.autismspeaks.org

Autism Speaks School Community Tool Kit

www.autismspeaks.org/school

Autism Speaks Leading the Way Tool Kit

www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/youth-organizations

Autism Speaks Visual Aid Tool Kit

www.autismspeaks.org/science/resources-programs/autism-treatment-network/tools-you-can-use/visual-supports

Special Needs Anti-Bullying Tool Kit

www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/bullying

POEMS

I Am Me! A Poem for Preschoolers:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZsEr1fhgWY

Autism Poetry

www.karensscrapsandgraphics.com/poetry/poetry.htm

I am Ethan

www.child-autism-parent-cafe.com/I-am-Ethan.html

First...Then

<http://www.parkerautismfoundation.org/the-misunderstood-child.html>

Smith, Melinda, "First ... Then ...", First ... Then ...

poems from planet autism. Ed. Ginninderra Press, 2012.

BLOGS

Autism Speaks Blogs

www.autismspeaks.org/blogs Read some amazing stories of accomplishment by autistic children and their families. Read about 8-year old Sophie's marathon walk to help other children regain their smile or take a look at the incredible artwork by Jeremy, a young adult who writes about being an artist with autism.

Teen Autism: Awareness Leads to Understanding

teenautism.com

VIDEO CLIPS

I Am the Child (4 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uz6pxCGo3Ns

Intro to Autism for Kids (7 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiy5c

My Autism and Me (14 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejpWWP1HNGQ

What Autism Feels Like (2 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=M20DIK1Yt3A

The Brain of An Autistic Child (13 minutes)

(recommended high school)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2o6KYlw2yww

My Name is David (5 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_00vRTkaaY

MATERIALS

Puzzle Templates *courtesy of Tim Van De Vall*

timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates

K - 1st

Susan Laughs

by Jeanne Willis

Susan is a girl in a wheelchair, though we don't see that until the last page. The book goes through all the things that Susan can do. She laughs, sings, paints, etc.

It's Okay To Be Different

by Todd Parr

Each page describes the different ways people and animals can be different from each other.

Some Monsters are Different

by David Milgrim

The story uses monsters to describe several ways they can be unique. It offers an opportunity to discuss different communication, preferences, strengths, physical attributes, etc.

1st - 5th

The Autism Acceptance Book

(there is also a teachers' guide)

by Ellen Sabin

The Autism Acceptance Book teaches children about autism, further develops their understanding for the people around them and encourages them to embrace people's differences with respect, compassion and kindness.

In My Mind: The World through the Eyes of Autism

by Adonya Wong

From the perspective of a child with autism, this book describes how Adonya experiences things in her world.

Ian's Walk

by Laurie Lears and Albert Whitman

Written from the perspective of a sister of someone with autism. (Sibling Story)

Since We're Friends

by Celeste Shally

A book about two boys: one has autism, the other does not. The story of their friendship provides practical examples of how to make such a unique relationship work.

4th - 7th

Rules

by Cynthia Lord

Written from the perspective of David's 12-year-old sister. (Sibling Story)

Middle School

How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World

by Temple Grandin

Temple Grandin's story about her success in life and experience with autism.

What's Up With Nick?

From the Organization for Autism Research

A story about Nick, a new kid in school with autism. This accordion booklet includes sections "Meeting a Kid with Autism", "Hanging Out With Kids That Have Autism", "Things to Remember About Autism" and more!

How to Talk to an Autistic Kid

by Daniel Stefanski (a child with autism)

Kids with autism have a hard time communicating, which can be frustrating for them and for their peers. In this intimate yet practical book, author Daniel Stefanski, a 14-year-old boy with autism, helps readers understand why kids with autism act the way they do and offers specific suggestions on how to get along with them. Written by a kid with autism for non-autistic kids, it provides personal stories, knowledgeable explanations and supportive advice—all in Daniel's unique and charming voice and accompanied by lively illustrations.

Middle/High School

The Reason I Jump

by Naoki Higashida

The inner voice of a 13-year-old boy with autism.

Al Capone Does My Shirts

by Gennifer Choldenko

From the perspective of the brother of a girl with autism. Set in 1935. (Sibling Story)

Book List

High School

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

by Mark Haddon

Narrated from the perspective of a 15-year-old with autism.

Mockingbird

by Kathryn Erskine

Narrated from the perspective of a girl with autism after her brother has died.

Cowboy & Wills

by Monica Holloway

The story of how a boy with autism, his family and his pet dog get along.

Discussion Guide

Mockingbird

by Kathryn Erskine

(Adapted from the Book Discussion Guide)

www.teachervision.com/tv/printables/penguin/tl-guide-mockingbird.pdf

Narrated from the perspective of a girl with autism after her brother has died.

Discussion Questions

1. People on the autism spectrum often exhibit ritualistic behaviors. What are some of Caitlin's ritual behaviors? How do these actions seem to make her feel? Can you think of some behaviors you might do as a ritual or habit?
2. Based on instructions on how to act, Caitlin reminds herself to "look at the person." Why do you think this is particularly difficult for her?
3. What are the reasons Caitlin dislikes recess?
4. When Josh and Caitlin have an altercation on the playground, their classmates come to Caitlin's defense, but later some of these same students laugh and tease Caitlin. Why would they choose to behave differently in each situation? What can we learn from their contradictory behavior?
5. Though she is a gifted artist, Caitlin is afraid of using color in her work. She also doesn't include people in her work. Why might these things make her uncomfortable? How is this related to her disability?

Cowboy & Wills

by Monica Holloway

Simon and Schuster

(Adapted from Discussion Guide at back of book)

The story of how a boy with autism, his family and his pet dog get along.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Wills' diagnosis of autism affect his parents? How is the experience different for each of his parents?
2. Wills has many talents that are extraordinary and exceptional. What are some of these talents?
3. Wills also has many challenges that are related to his autism. What are some of these challenges?
4. Wills often feels extremely afraid and nervous about trying new things or being in a new situation. Can you describe a situation you have experienced that made you feel afraid in the beginning, but turned out to be rewarding in the end?
5. There are several children in the story who reach out to Wills. How do these acts of kindness affect his progress? Can you think of any times you have felt supported by your peers?
6. Describe Wills' relationship to his dog, Cowboy. How does Wills change after Cowboy comes into his life? Can you think of other situations where a pet can help someone with a disability?

Discussion Guide

Rules

by Cynthia Lord

(Adapted from the *Book Discussion Guide*)

www.cynthialord.com/pdf/rules_discuss.pdf

Written from the perspective of David's 12-year-old sister.

1. A main character usually has an outer problem and an inner problem that creates the conflict in the book. What does Catherine want that is outside herself? What does she want within herself?
2. What has kept Catherine from achieving those “wants” before the book begins? Describe Catherine’s relationship with David.
3. Do your siblings ever stand in the way of what you want? How? What have you done to solve that?
4. How are Catherine’s rules good for David? How do her rules hold him back? How do Catherine’s rules hold her back?
5. What are Catherine’s feelings about Jason when she first meets him?
6. If you were drawing word cards for Jason, what would you have drawn for “gross?” “Awesome?” “Stinks a big one!!!
7. Name at least three characters who exhibit prejudice in RULES. What do they say or do which shows that prejudice?
8. How do Catherine’s feelings change toward Jason as the book continues? What causes that change?
9. What choices does Catherine make near the end of the book that show growth on her part?
10. What does Catherine risk in inviting Jason to the dance? Do you think that risk was worth it? Why or why not?
11. If Catherine were to write a rule at the very end of the book, what do you think it would be?
12. Have you ever had a conflict with a new friend? How did you resolve it? Have you ever had to choose between two friends? What did you do?

Frequently Asked Questions

From Kids and For Kids

How do people get autism? Is it contagious?

Autism is not contagious. The brains of people who have autism just work a little differently. Their brain looks a lot like mine and yours, but there are differences in the way the messages are sent from the body to the brain and from the brain to the rest of the body. You cannot get autism from someone else.

Why do students with autism talk differently? or Why don't some people with autism talk?

All people communicate in different ways. Some people like to use their hands to gesture or their face to make a lot of expressions while they talk. Some people prefer to write or text message because talking on the phone or in person is hard for them. Some people speak quietly and others speak loudly. It can sometimes be difficult for people with autism to communicate with spoken words or facial expressions. They learn how to communicate in other ways. Sometimes they repeat what other people say; sometimes they use sign language, pictures, writing or communication devices to talk. Some people with autism can talk a lot and communicate pretty well. Every person with autism is different.

Why won't students with autism play with me? Why do students with autism have a hard time playing?

For some, learning to “play” does not come easy. It's not only that the students may not understand the rules of the game, but they also may not know how to do things that others find easy. They do not automatically know how to ask to play, approach a friend and say hi or take turns. Sometimes people with autism like to play in very specific ways and it may be hard to learn new ways to play. Having patience and giving them time to respond are good ways to help your friends play. Also, be a detective and look for ways your friends are already playing and try to join in.

Why do students with autism flap their hands/spin/show other “different” behaviors?

Have you ever tried to do those things? Sometimes, they do those things because it feels pretty cool for them! A lot of people with autism experience things with their senses in a different way than you and I experience them. Sometimes they are doing those things simply because they like to do it. Sometimes it might be a way for them to show you they feel excited, nervous or even mad. Every person with autism is different and the reasons they do certain things are very different, too. We all have our own way of doing things and that's what makes each of us special!

Thank You

Authorial Credit

Janelle Franco, MA, developed this Puzzle Piece Project curriculum for use in her own school to celebrate Autism Awareness Month. She has generously provided her lesson plans to Autism Speaks to assist other educators in bringing autism awareness and compassion to the classroom. Franco has worked with children with autism for 10 years. She began her career as a paraprofessional, supporting students in an inclusive setting and went on to become a Board Certified Associate Behavior Analyst in 2008. At that time, Franco worked as a behaviorist in homes and as a senior instructor at a private school for children with severe autism. She received an Education Specialist credential in Moderate/ Severe Disabilities and a Masters in Special Education from San Francisco State University. Franco has been teaching in the Bay Area public school setting for five years. Her classroom is specially designed to support students in grades kindergarten through second grade who are moderate to severely affected by autism. Franco utilizes a variety of teaching techniques, social support systems and behavioral strategies to create a very inclusive and successful learning environment for all students. Beginning in the summer of 2014, Franco will work as an independent Autism Specialist to support people with autism and their families as they learn to participate and make meaningful contributions in their own relationships and in the larger community. *You can reach Ms. Franco at janelleautismspecialist@gmail.com.*